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Marion County Prosecutor's Office secures first conviction on human trafficking charges

(Indianapolis, Ind.) Marion County Prosecutor Terry Curry announced today the office has secured its first conviction on human trafficking charges.

Chris Smiley, who was charged with human trafficking, promoting prostitution, battery, intimidation and strangulation, was convicted on all counts by a jury this afternoon. The human trafficking charges involved a victim who was forced into prostitution as a result of a drug debt that was not her own. At the time Smiley's crime occurred, the victim was 19 years old. The victim did not have a criminal history, as either an adult or juvenile.

Human trafficking is often described by legal experts as modern day slavery. Indiana's law has been on the books since July 1, 2007.

The case against Mr. Smiley had all the hallmarks of human trafficking. The victim's absence had gone unreported to police for at least three weeks and the amount of money demanded from her continued to increase. Ultimately, the physical and psychological control Mr. Smiley exerted over the victim resulted in an effective case for human trafficking.

"In our closing remarks today, I shared with the jury that human trafficking is one person controlling another person, using violence and then exploiting them economically, paying them nothing," said Mary Hutchison, the lead prosecutor on the case. "I also thank our team of Jody Hilger and Angie Mahone for successfully prosecuting Mr. Smiley for his crime, as well as IMPD's Vice Unit for their dogged pursuit of Mr. Smiley and their help in bringing him to justice."

The Prosecutor's Office is unable to provide the victim's name, only her initials (B.A), based on the human trafficking statute IC 35-42-3.5-4.